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Methodism as it is,
from the "Eclectic Review"

Q.M.J.

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1. *An Exposition of the Laws of Conference Methodism; as enacted by the Conference in 1835; proving them to be contrary to the Concessions granted in 1797: in a Letter, explanatory and expostulatory, to the Rev. W. M. Bunting; containing the true Reasons of the Author's Separation from the Conference Connexion; and a Defence of the Wesleyan-Methodist Association.* By the Rev. Robert Eckett. 8vo. pp. 64. Pearson, London. 1846*.
2. *The Round Preacher; or, Reminiscences of Methodist Circuit Life.* Small 8vo. pp. 364. Taylor, Bradford. 1845*. ~~1844~~

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element in computing the several forces of the community. And, even now, when its adherents are too considerable to escape the notice of the most indifferent, it is a thing of which

and promulgated by the Conference of 1797, and by which the Connexion was governed from that time till the year 1835. Mr. Eckett, who entered the Connexion, and filled simultaneously the offices of leader, local preacher, steward, and trustee, under the regime of 1797, had strong objections to the new regulations, as virtually a repeal of the old, and, being prevented by those very regulations from expressing his objections in a constitutional manner, had recourse to means of doing so open to him as the inhabitant of a free country. For this, he was summoned as a private member of the Wesleyan society before the authorized tribunal ; and, his violation of the rules of 1835 having been proved, he was formally expelled by the fiat of his superintendent, and, in being expelled, was degraded from all his offices. Thus excluded from the parent body, he aided in the formation of the Wesleyan-Methodist Association, of which he may be regarded as one of the founders and most distinguished members. 'I acted,' he observes, 'in the way that Dr. Candlish, and other ministers of the Free Church of Scotland, more recently adopted to make known their differences with the church of Scotland, from which they have separated. Many respected ministers, both Independents and Baptists, willingly lent the dissenters from Conference Methodism their chapels, to hold meetings for the exposition of their sentiments and grievances: in like manner, many Conference Methodist superintendents have allowed Methodist chapels to be occupied by the ministers of the Free Church of Scotland. It is also worthy of remark, that the principles inculcated in both cases are somewhat similar. The Wesleyan-Methodist Association objected to the absolute authority claimed by the Methodist Conference to rule the societies according to the laws of 1835, and contrary to the laws of 1797; asserting that the lay officers of the societies should have an effective voice in the administration of discipline over the members of the societies : and the members of the Free Church of Scotland objected to the setting aside of the Veto Act, and claimed for the people the right of having an effective voice as to the appointment of their ministers. * * * * Let it therefore be remembered by Mr. Bunting and his brethren, that whatever measure of displeasure they may think themselves justified in manifesting towards me, they are equally entitled to receive equal displeasure from the ministers of the established church of Scotland. The same reasons which will justify the public exposure of the differences in the Scottish church, will justify the public exposure of, in my judgment, the not less serious evils contained in the present laws of Conference Methodism !' By the clearest and strongest evidence, Mr. Eckett proves,—that, on the death of Mr. Wesley in 1791, the preachers attempted to exercise over the people that absolute authority which had seldom been disputed to him; that the people resisted the attempt; that, in 1794, the preachers were obliged to make a show of concession; that, in 1795, further concessions were wrung from them; that, in 1797, the people, still dissatisfied, compelled the Conference to declare a sort of constitution; that, in 1828, a question arose between the preachers and the people as to the right interpretation of some of the articles in that constitution; that this question was from time to time debated with increasing bitterness; that, in 1835, the Conference terminated the controversy with new enactments, directly opposed to the view taken by the people of the disputed portions of the laws of 1797; and that, while the latter, fairly interpreted and acted upon, secured the just rights and liberties of the people, the laws of 1835 were entirely subversive of

the most observant know but little more than its existence. Our present design is to diminish an amount of ignorance so strange and culpable.

those rights and liberties, ‘requiring such submission to ministerial authority as is inconsistent with the usages of all other protestant communities, and with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.’ These conclusions are sustained with an amount of proof perfectly irresistible. Mr. Eckett is master of his subject, and has treated it with a calmness that inspires confidence, and a perspicuity that promotes conviction. We are tolerably well versed in the controversy, and we know of no other publication in which it is so luminously illustrated. It forms an instructive page in the ecclesiastical history of the nineteenth century, though a page, in many respects, more suited to the fifteenth. But, while we thank Mr. Bunting for having provoked a publication so valuable and interesting, we (like its excellent author) ‘must be permitted to say, that, unless such proceedings are carefully avoided, the movement now making for promoting Christian union, will tend to aggravate sectarian controversy and encourage the spirit of sectarian persecution.’

The author of ‘The Round (or circuit) Preacher,’ professes to give ‘a faithful picture of the state of modern Methodism,’ his moral being ‘the dreadful evils which arise from schism.’ But for one circumstance, we might suspect him to be the son of a Wesleyan minister, solicitous to prove the sincerity of his new-born churchmanship by reviling his father’s religious connections. The circumstance referred to occurs in the ‘Appendix, note A.’, where we are told, ‘My father was suspected of sympathising with a disaffected party at Leeds. The leader of this party was a Mr. Kilham, a travelling preacher. The introduction of an organ into one of the chapels at Leeds, was used as an occasion for the outbreak. They petitioned Conference for the removal of their grievances. And when they could obtain nothing more than their slight mitigation, they left the body, and, forming a new sect, assumed the name of the Methodist New Connexion.’ A writer who knows no better than to confound the origin of the Methodist New Connexion in 1795, with the Leeds schism in 1827-8, which issued in the formation of the body called ‘Protestant Methodists,’ afterwards merged into the Wesleyan-Methodist Association of 1835,—must not expect to be regarded as giving ‘faithful pictures of the state of modern Methodism.’ Of his competency in other respects, we may judge from the first two sentences of ‘Note B.’ ‘The term of probation lasts four years. When ended, the *novitiates* are received into full connexion by the imposition of hands.’ It is evident the writer is, himself, a ‘novitiate,’ and will always remain a ‘novitiate.’ This ignoramus reminds us of a certain popular evangelical clergyman who entered the Church in revenge for being voted incompetent to the functions of a Wesleyan local preacher! At page 56, we have a sample of his *Cambridge* lore, where he describes a flashy local preacher ‘with rings on his fingers, and chains crossing his waistcoat at triangles; and a huge bunch of seals and keys suspended to a black watered ribbon!’ ‘The Round Preacher’ is a vulgar caricature, purporting to contain the autobiography of a superfine son of a Wesleyan, who, before he had ceased to be a ‘novitiate,’ grew disgusted with the associations of his office, and seceded to the Established Church. The selection of characters is made with a view to accumulate upon the head of Wesleyanism every thing mean, base, sordid, grovelling, and ludicrous. Such traits may, no doubt, be found within the Wesleyan body; but they equally occur in all bodies: even the Church of England has its Gathercole. ‘The Round Preacher’ allows to Wesleyanism no alloy of good,

We shall not enter into the history of the rise and progress of Methodism; for that would carry us far beyond the limits prescribed. Nor shall we be tempted to treat the subject controversially; which would be attended with a like result. Our simple purpose is, to furnish a succinct description of METHODISM AS IT IS, drawn from personal knowledge and observation, and from other sources of undeniable authenticity.

The supreme governing authority in the Wesleyan body, of which we now speak, is *the Conference*, at once the legislature and the high court of appeal.* Ministers and members have no alternative but to do its bidding. It is composed exclusively of the clergy. No private member, no layman, is admitted, even as a spectator. It sits with closed doors, jealously guarded. The *legal* Conference consists of a hundred ministers, vacancies being filled up partly by election, and partly according to seniority; but all who have been received into full connexion

represents rare instances as common characteristics, magnifies every real defect, introduces upon the scene the pure creations of the author's distempered fancy, and spoils those few passages which approach to 'a faithful picture,' with dashes of gross calumny and exaggeration. 'The preaching couple' is, for the most part, a sheer fabrication. The preaching of women is discouraged, and not, under any circumstances, permitted, without the joint approval of the superintendent and the quarterly meeting. We doubt if there is now a single voucher in the Connexion for the *Rev.* 'Mrs. Sleek-face.' The author designs the feigned conversion of her daughters to reflect discredit upon the mother, and to excite sympathy for the amiable and oppressed hypocrites; whereas the effect is exactly the reverse: the mother's previous anxiety and subsequent joy make us forget her sordid temper and Caudle-like ebullitions; while the deliberate deception practised by the daughters excuses, if it does not vindicate, the severity of the maternal rule. The description of a love-feast is one of the truest things in the book, especially the speech of the little old woman who pinched herself to pay her class-money, making 'sure she should never be a loser for't i' the end, *as the preachers allas tells us:*' but even this is marred with many improbabilities. The attempts to hit off Dr. Newton, the late 'Billy Dawson,' and some other platform speakers, under slight changes of name, are miserable failures; but the doings of 'Mr. Rivers, the converted squire,' though, through the native incapacity of the artist, wanting in graphic force, are by no means over-drawn. The volume terminates with three colloquies between the author and John Wesley's ghost, introduced to make him eat his own words against the exclusive claims of episcopal ordination, condemn modern Methodism as wholly alien from his design, and encourage the interlocutor in conforming to the Established Church. How particularly well qualified Mr. 'Sparks' is to give verisimilitude to such scenes, will be apparent to those who know that Mr. Wesley was of *Zacchean* stature, when we mention that he describes the apparition as 'a tall personage coming towards him.' In one word, 'The Round Preacher' is a pointless Parthian arrow!

* 'An appeal to any civil jurisdiction is a violation of an established rule of our society, as well as of the law of the New Testament; and he who takes such a step, forfeits his right of appeal to the Conference.'—*Grindrod's Compendium*, p. 30.

(alias, ordained) have the privilege of a vote; except that only those who have been fourteen years in the ministry, can join in the election of the president and the secretary, and in elections to fill up the legal hundred: even the youngest minister, however, may be present. The votes of the Conference at large, which generally numbers from four hundred to five hundred ministers, subsequently receive the formal ratification of the legal Conference, the constant presence of forty of whom is necessary to render the acts of the Conference valid. The sittings are annual, in July and August, usually occupying from two to three weeks, and are held in rotation in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham, and Newcastle-on-Tyne. By means of almost unexampled order and industry, and of a well-digested scheme of preparatory committees, a vast complexity of business is transacted with equal exactness and dispatch. Of what is done, no more transpires by authority than it is deemed expedient to insert in the published selection from the 'Minutes.' For example: 'Are there any complaints against any of our preachers?' Answer: *They were examined one by one**? The most important and difficult business of the Conference is the stationing of the ministers. But this work is facilitated by the appointment of 'representatives,'—representatives, not of the people, but only of their brother ministers in various localities,—who constitute 'the stationing committee,' and submit their rough draft of the stations for final revision by the Conference. The people, in their several circuits, are indeed permitted to petition the Conference for this minister or against that; but their petitions are not always regarded, and they have ultimately no choice but to receive and support such ministers as it may please the Conference to send them. This unique body reigns equally supreme in all other connexional concerns; enacting new laws, or repealing old; determining finally every question of doctrine, discipline, or finance; appointing to every ministerial office; and, in short, exercising a sovereign sway in all the affairs of the community†.

The Conference is itself, however, subject to rule—the rule of one of its own members. In every deliberative assembly there will naturally arise leading minds—individuals whose superior talents, knowledge, wisdom, judgment, or discretion, are gene-

* Minutes of Conference, *de anno in annum*.

† We learn from Mr. Grindrod (note, pp. 9—10) that the Conference affect a 'parliamentary verbiage.' The speakers used to say, 'this house,' and 'this or the other side of the house'; but they have lately substituted 'this Conference.' The members still addict themselves to audible expressions of applause and disapprobation, which Mr. Grindrod censures with all the unction of a vicar-apostolic. One of the authorised rules of debate is, 'Be quite easy, if a majority decide against you!'

rally acknowledged, and gain for them the confidence of those of their compeers whose opinions they reflect. Thus we see Sir Robert Peel, Lord John Russell, and Lord George Bentinck, the accredited leaders of different sections of the House of Commons; as also, before the disruption, Drs. Chalmers and Cooke were severally at the head of the non-intrusionists and moderates in the general assembly of the church of Scotland. But we almost uniformly find, that the tendency of such arrangements to degenerate into an autocratic despotism, is checked by the division of legislative assemblies into opposing, and consequently neutralizing parties. In the Wesleyan Conference this can hardly be said to be the case. That body being, as we have seen, composed of ministers, to the entire exclusion of the laity, not only as members, but even as spectators, the ordinary occasions of party strife are, for the most part, cut off. An *esprit de corps*, not surpassed in cohesive force by that which animates and binds together the compactest of the monastic orders, is naturally developed; and each man, having entered the Wesleyan ministry with a full knowledge of the prerogatives and powers claimed for it, so far from being under any temptation to introduce discord into councils which have for their prime end the preservation of the system in its integrity, is rather engaged by his very position to promote an hierarchical unanimity.

These circumstances must be taken into the account, in considering the absolute sway exercised by the celebrated JABEZ BUNTING in the affairs of the Wesleyan Connexion. It is a favourite boast with the loose-tongued Wesleyans, that the president of their Conference possesses more power than the Archbishop of Canterbury; but Dr. Bunting possesses more power than the president, except when he happens himself to occupy the chair,—an honour that has fallen to his lot more frequently than to that of any other man, living or dead. This imputation, as though it implied disgrace, has often been denied; but its truth is too notorious to need the support of oaths or affidavits. At present, the presidential chair is worthily filled by a gentleman of independent mind, whose election was proclaimed as a triumph over the great leader of the body; but we have no doubt that he permitted it, willing, though at the expense of a construction unfavourable to himself, that the established clergy, who have of late been troublesome to our Wesleyan brethren as well as to other nonconformists, should learn a lesson from the elevation of an avowed and a sturdy dissenter to the conferential chair. The venerable JACOB STANLEY is no mere puppet, moving as the wires are pulled; but, even during *his* year of office, the Connexion has remained, as every

Wesleyan knows, really under the government of its permanent dictator, whose talents and (we are bound to add) whose virtues have raised him to this high position.

JABEZ BUNTING was born about the year 1780, at or near Monyash in Derbyshire. His father was by trade a tailor, and in humble circumstances. Both his parents were members of the Wesleyan society ; and by his pious mother he was named *Jabez* soon after birth. The family removed to Manchester while he was yet a child ; and his first teacher was John Holt, a Wesleyan local preacher, who kept a school in Oldham-street. He was afterwards admitted into the free grammar-school, where he is said to have attracted the attention of the celebrated Dr. Percival, founder of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester ; who, perceiving him to be a sharp boy, took him into his service, and ultimately employed him as an amanuensis. It is a sufficient proof of his good conduct, that his old master appointed him one of his executors. In this situation, the education of young Jabez proceeded, if not with scholastic regularity, yet in such a manner as to elicit and cultivate his peculiar talents. While reaping its advantages, he was so happy as to avoid its disadvantages. Though surrounded by Unitarians, of whom his learned patron was one, he, at an early period, joined the Wesleyan society. Among his first religious associates, was the late Mr. James Wood, of Manchester, who remained his bosom friend through life, seconding him in his plans for the benefit of the Connexion with almost unequalled munificence, and considered as having had more influence with him than any other layman in the body. But the turning point in the history of Dr. Bunting is traceable to the appointment of the Rev. William Thompson to the Manchester circuit in the critical year 1797-8. This Methodist sage, who presided at the first Conference after Mr. Wesley's decease, took young Jabez by the hand, and is supposed not only to have given him the rudiments of his Methodistico-legislative learning, but also to have inspired him with a *passion* for such pursuits. Under the auspices of this Mentor, he entered, in 1799, upon itinerant life. His first circuit was Oldham ; his first superintendent, the Rev. John Gaultier,—a man of gentlemanly manners, amiable disposition, various though crude attainments, and who used to boast that he ‘loved every pin and screw in Methodism.’ The youth of Jabez, his talents, and his easy, graceful, serious, warm, and natural address, procured him a second year’s appointment to Oldham. The present century he began in Macclesfield, where, also, he spent two years, during which he escaped being sent by Dr. Coke on a mission to Gibraltar, and

fell into the toils of love. The Wesleyan Connexion owe it, perhaps, to the clever woman who became his first wife, that he did not devote himself to missionary labour. Nor is this the only obligation conferred upon them by the late Mrs. Bunting, who, both as a wife and as a mother, was peculiarly adapted to aid in the formation of a character for public life. Through the influence of the Rev. Walter Griffith,—a man who united the gentlest manners with the firmest principles, and of whom it is recorded that he deliberately refused to meet death with his faculties clouded by opiates,—Mr. Bunting passed from Macclesfield to London, where his reputation was already such that he preached before the Sunday-school Union, a discourse published by request under the title of ‘A Great Work.’ After a sojourn of two years in the metropolis, he was removed to Manchester, where he first distinguished himself as an advocate for ecclesiastical order, in a joint pamphlet against some troublesome insurgents called ‘the Bandroom party.’ From this time, although still young, he may be regarded as one of the leading men in the Connexion. No man ever rose so rapidly. By unprecedented strides, he stepped successively into the highest offices. With every fresh circuit, he gained new and more extensive popularity; and, while a general favourite among the people, as speedily acquired the almost universal confidence of his ministerial brethren. They recognised in him one who had well studied the Wesleyan economy, who possessed a remarkable talent for government and administration, and who was capable of comprehending in his grasp the largest interests, prompt in fertile expedients for every emergency, and farsighted in his estimate of the future. Four times has he been elected to the chair of Conference; and for many years he has filled the two most distinguished permanent offices in the Connexion,—those of President of the Wesleyan Theological Institution, in its two branches at Richmond and Didsbury, and of Principal Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Resident in London, but at liberty to travel when and where he pleases, his sagacious eye is constantly cast over all the interests of the Wesleyan church; information pours in to him from every corner of the kingdom and from every quarter of the globe; and often as the Conference comes round, he astonishes yet more and more his admiring and confiding brethren, with his intimate and perfect knowledge of the affairs of their whole body, and with the unhesitating and almost unerring wisdom that enables him to surmount every difficulty, anticipate every necessity, and satisfy every demand.

Of the mode and character of his administration there are various opinions, modified by the aspects under which it is

viewed, the feelings of parties, and their opportunities of information. Some are altogether eulogistic, others qualify their commendations with a dilution of censure, while others again see more to censure than to applaud. ‘During the last thirty years,’ says the late Rev. Edmund Grindrod,* ‘our legislation bears intrinsic evidence of being the production of one superior mind. Other parties may have contributed original suggestions and emendations. But it is obvious that one master hand, for the last generation, has framed the great majority of the acts of our Conference. Besides many minor regulations dispersed through our annual minutes, the invaluable system of finance, particularly in the department of the Contingent Fund, the entire constitution of the Missionary Society, of the Theological Institution, and of our Sunday Schools, were framed by the same honoured minister. May the future leaders in our spiritual Israel be adorned with the same virtues which have so eminently characterised his honourable and useful career! ’

With this brief testimony, which, though it proceeds from a gentleman who owed a great deal to the object of his eulogy, is by no means overcharged, may be contrasted that of another writer†, who has had equal opportunities with Mr. Grindrod of forming a correct judgment, without, however, having equal inducements to take a favourable view,—who, indeed, acknowledges that, ‘as an individual, he is in love with neither the spirit nor the policy of the gentleman in question.’ By this critic he is regarded as a ruler, a politician, and a financier. As a ruler, he is deemed despotic both by nature and from art. This temper is thought to have involved him in numerous Wesleyan broils,—in the band-room fracas, at Manchester; in the squabble about teaching writing on Sundays, at Sheffield; in another Sunday-school agitation, during his second station at Manchester; in the miserable organ schism, at Leeds; and in the famous prosecution of Dr. Warren, wherein he was right enough as to the man, but very far wrong as to the principles. As a politician, he has credit for great foresight, caution, judgment, and what, but for the influence of religion, would degenerate into low cunning; and, ‘being fond of his own measures, he is naturally jealous of those of others, and not always nice, either as to means or expression, in the way of opposition.’ His chief excellence is thought to lie in the exchequer department. He is *au fait* at estimates, and considerably up to ways and means. His calculations can seldom be impugned, and his budget generally passes without a division, although the conse-

* Compendium of the Laws and Regulations of Wesleyan Methodism. Introduction. 1842.

† Manuscript, 1844.

quent monetary pressure may sometimes elicit a few murmurs. It is questioned whether he has not devoted himself too much to the mint, anise, and cummin, and too little to judgment, mercy, and truth ; too much to the income and expenditure of the Connexion, and too little to the spiritual advance or decline of the people ; too much to the pocket, and too little to the heart. He is more than suspected of an idolatrous homage for the great and rich. His vote for Lord Sandon in 1833, is remembered against him by others besides anti-slavery men ; nor do his selections for the chair at the annual meetings of the Wesleyan Missionary Society always escape animadversion. He may be influenced by the colour of men's politics as well as of their money ; but, in the furtherance of his plans, he is observed too frequently to associate with himself men of large property and little piety. His eloquence is of a high order, but it is that of a pleader rather than an orator ; and, especially in later life, his public career has been much more that of a man of business, than of a minister of religion. Among the connexional measures of which he is the author, are enumerated,—the sanction of organs in chapels ; the law which qualifies ministers of fourteen years' standing to vote in elections to the 'high offices'* of president and secretary ; the holding of public missionary meetings, which began at Leeds, and which was for some time strongly opposed by many of the older and more influential ministers ; the appointment of a separate house and premises for the missionary secretary and the business of the Missionary Society ; the establishment of the Theological Institution, which, however desirable in itself, was carried with a high hand ; the stationing of the president in London, on his election to office ; with many other measures of minor significance. It is added, in proof of his forecast, that there is hardly one measure of his, by which he has not personally profited. The fourteen-year men, outvoting the 'grave and reverend,' but no longer 'most potent seniors,' immediately rewarded his successful exertions, by putting him into the presidential chair, to which he had paved for himself this shorter road. The missionary meetings resulted in the secretaryship. Mission premises gave additional permanency to the office, with a station in London. And the Theological Institution involved his appointment to the presidency thereof. His policy, it is remarked, never quits him.† By various contrivances, he has managed, without directly trenching on Methodist law, to neutralise, for the furtherance of his designs, the itinerant principle. Nearly half his connexional life has been spent in

* Grindrod, p. 3.

† See 'Fly-Sheets,' No. II., p. 15, respecting Mr. Fowler.

London. The law is, that no man shall stay longer than three years in a circuit, nor return to it till after the lapse of eight years; but, by dividing London into many circuits, he has made it possible for a minister, like Cowper's fire-side traveller, to pass a great part of his *itinerant* career without once getting into a railway train, or, like the hand of a clock, to reach the utmost circumference without straying from that influential centre. By these and similar arts, he has obtained such a position as to get himself and his immediate friends placed on all the connexional committees. Thus the metropolis has become the seat of empire for the *imperium* as well as for the *imperio* ;* only, the former being an ecclesiastical affair, the council chamber is found, not in Downing-street, but in the more appropriate locale of Bishops-gate. Some of the arts attributed to him are vulgar enough, and would almost be dignified by being described as 'low cunning.' He waits till others have spoken in the Conference, to have the advantage of making the last impression. He defers, till near the close of its sittings, when the majority of the brethren have gone home, his more questionable measures. At the Conference of 1843 or 1844, for instance, he is said to have obtained by this wretched stratagem, a veto for the London committee, authorizing them to reject a candidate for the ministry, after having passed not only the Quarterly Meeting, not only the District Meeting, but even the Conference itself,—a point opposed by different district committees the year before, when hinted to them in a printed circular. He is regarded as having too much lost sight of the true ends of Methodism, as a system for the conversion of men, in his prevailing desire to aggrandise it in the eyes of the public. Hence, it is alleged, there is a great deal of glare and glitter about his measures. Every thing is calculated to strike and impress. The Centenary Hall was designed to make folk stare. 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built?' Every connexional office, from the highest to the lowest, has participated in his spirit, and been invested with an authority challenging awe, and adapted to extort obedience from fear, rather than to induce it from love; he himself being more feared than loved by his brethren. His close study of public events, and his frequent attendance in the gallery of the House of Commons, are thought to have been made subservient to his purposes. He is charged with having brought the politician and the statesman into the church, and with turning to account any hint or lesson in tactics, policy, finance, or government, which his quick observation may have picked up in the purlieus of parliament. It is not denied that his

* Southey, in the Preface to his Life of Wesley, designates the Wesleyan body as an '*imperium in imperio*'

administration, ‘with all its blemishes,’ has been productive of ‘great good;’ but it is bitterly lamented that his line of procedure has had the effect, even within the walls of the Conference, of fostering ‘the spirit of suspicion,’ in place of ‘the frankness of brotherhood.’ In fine, so far as the present authority deponeth, ‘Dr. Bunting’s power is unbounded, and is often withering in its effect on free discussion,—too great, indeed, for the safety of the body and for the comfort of his brethren; and he will serve as a warning to them in future, to check the risings of any other aspirant who may seek to tread in his steps. So much for the ONE MAN who is *alone* amidst the thousands of our Israel, standing like a tall column in the centre of a vast plain, *seen* by all and *over* all.’

The foregoing sketch of the man who has mainly contributed to make Methodism what it has become during the first half of the nineteenth century, is obviously one-sided; and, though, it may be, perfectly true in each particular, is so largely composed of objections, apart from what is praiseworthy, as to produce an effect which neither honest truth nor equal justice would quite warrant. We have seen each side presented by itself: let us now see both sides together—if possible, a true picture of the whole man, nothing extenuating nor setting down aught in malice. There lies upon our table an anonymous volume,* in which, under the mysterious heading ‘No. I. * * * * *’, we find a sketch of character which we have no hesitation in applying to the subject in hand. The volume itself excited, on its publication, so lively an interest in Wesleyan circles, that every one was curious to ascertain the pen from which it had proceeded; and we believe an investigation not easily to be paralleled beyond the walls of the Holy Inquisition, was instituted in the Conference itself, with the view, if possible, to decide the interesting question. For our own part, we never had a doubt upon the subject. It is said that only an Apelles can paint an Alexander: sure we are that none but the man himself could paint with such literal fidelity as we discover in one of the hundred portraits of this Wesleyan gallery. Why the Conference should have been in such a taking about these ‘takings,’ we never could make out. The limner holds a free, yet faithful pencil; and his sketches, though spirited, are not exaggerated: even when sarcastic, he is not acrimonious. Dr. Bunting’s sycophants may foolishly resent any thing which intimates his kinship to the fallen race of Adam; but he is himself too magnanimous to wish, like Wolsey, to be portrayed only on the better side of his face, well aware that such a step would warrant less flattering painters in exhibiting the worse alone. The fair-dealing artist of whose full-length painting

* Wesleyan Takings, 2d edition, 1840.

we now propose to give a reduced drawing, has avoided both extremes. He begins by describing the gentleman for whose actual name, instead of the needless superscription 'This is a lion,' he has substituted the complimentary symbol of *seven stars*, as a luminary in the Wesleyan sky which early reached its zenith. He did not rise to his pre-eminent altitude by a succession of slow and progressive steps, but started up to it at once. Yet he really disregards popularity. Excepting his incomparable judgment, he is not so much remarkable for the brilliancy of any one trait, as for the rare combination and harmonious constellation of all. He has undertaken nothing in which he has not succeeded; and, severe as he sometimes is, and not over solicitous to heal a wound after he has made it, he has never violated a single principle of honour, justice, or the higher dignity of man. His influence has never been known to wane. His measures, always well matured, are generally fortified by a case of necessity for their ultimate adoption; and, though sometimes they are prematurely pressed, and enforced with arguments more taking and plausible than solid and convincing, yet the multitude are, by skilful generalship, surprised into their adoption. His paramount authority is admitted, and perceived to be extremely liable to abuse; yet, how has he obtained it? Not by fraud, not by misconduct; but by devoting his superior talents to promote, not selfish objects, but the best interests of the Connexion. As a speaker, his peculiar strength is in reply. See him in the Conference. There he sits on the platform. With hand behind ear, he gathers the words of the brother who is speaking. Are any of his favourite views impugned, his keen grey eye shoots lynx-like along the line of sound, and quails or rouses the speaker. At length, all else have spoken, and the *rex idem hominum Dominique sacerdos* rises to his feet. All is silence and expectation. The feelings of the previous speakers refer quite as much to themselves as to the subject; and all are sensible that 'the fate of the question absolutely hangs upon his breath.' He never approaches a subject without illuminating it, and rarely retires from the field without conquest; followed by the applauding smiles of his friends, and leaving the opposing powers in a state of suspense or blank astonishment. 'For reply, we never heard a near approach to him. His replies are like the set speeches of some of our first speakers; so full, so regular, so neat, so consecutive, so pertinent, so easy, so ready.' He has the reputation of being arbitrary and personal; but he is at least disinterested,* and, in a case of culpability, will as soon fly in the face of a friend as of a foe. 'Meet him as an opponent, and he is

* See, however, 'Fly-Sheets,' No. II., p. 5, note, and p. 22. See, also, pp. 7, 8, for a curious note.

terrible; take him as a friend, and success is certain; even to men of minor talents, over whom he may extend the fostering shadow of his wing.' In speaking, nathless, he never soars, being without the requisite pinions,—fancy, imagination, genius. His mind is purely metaphysical; but he is always clear, luminous, and instructive, displaying the results of meditation rather than of reading. His speaking, ever spontaneous, is by turns pathetic or powerful. In prayer, he is remarkably fervent. His writings are few, and are not likely to become more numerous. His fame will never extend beyond the limits of his own communion; but, in the list of its men of renown, the name of BUNTING will rank next to that of WESLEY.

If this brief and imperfect sketch of the redoubtable chief of the Wesleyan Connexion should have been tedious to the reader, our apology is, that a description of *METHODISM AS IT IS* without a somewhat particular mention of the man who has *made* it what it is, would have been as defective as the play of Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark omitted.

The *District Meeting*, already incidentally referred to, comes next to the Conference. It is understood to have been devised by the gentleman who inducted Dr. Bunting into the Wesleyan mysteries. It bears a relation to the Conference, analogous to that which Synods in Scotland bear to General Assemblies. Like the Conference, it is composed of ministers exclusively, except that certain lay-officers are occasionally present during the transaction of purely financial business. England is divided into twenty-nine districts, passing under the names of the chief towns comprised within them, as 'The London District,' 'The Manchester District,' 'The Hull District,' and so on. In this court, all the regular ministers within the bounds of the district, have a seat; but probationers have no vote. Its sessions recur twice a year; once before the Conference, to prepare the business of the district for its review; and a second time afterwards, to arrange the financial affairs of the district. Each district has its chairman, (invested with a kind of prelatical rank and episcopal authority,) and its financial secretary, both of whom are appointed by the Conference; the chairman, however, being liable to deposition by the district meeting, and to all its ordinary powers, in common with his brethren. Besides the regular meetings, provision is made for Special, Mixed, and Minor District Meetings, under special and extraordinary circumstances.

At the regular district meetings in May, a minute inquiry is instituted into the character and conduct of each minister, and the result reported to the Conference. The principal questions are: '1. Is there any objection to his moral and religious character? 2. Does he believe and preach *our* doctrines? 3. Has

he duly observed and enforced our discipline? 4. Has he [no matter how long he may have been in the ministry] competent abilities for our itinerant work?' Separate answers to each of these questions in relation to each of the ministers (in number from twenty to fifty), are expected to appear in the district minutes. If during the previous year any minister have married, it is inquired whether he has married 'in the Lord'; and, if not, he is reported to the Conference. And, even though he have married 'in the Lord,' yet, if he 'took a step towards marriage, without first consulting with his brethren, with the superintendent,' or 'chief pastor' in each circuit*, 'in particular,' but 'not excluding his other ministerial colleagues,' the Conference is to be informed that this 'important direction has been violated.' We presume it is the object of this regulation to promote *mariages de convenance* among the ministers, and especially to prevent them from marrying out of the Connexion, which is expressly condemned as 'highly inexpedient and dangerous.' Any minister who marries a woman without her parents' consent, is, on proof thereof, liable to be excluded from the Connexion; but the rule is rendered ambiguous by qualifying clauses, and of this ambiguity a very respectable minister reaped the advantage, who ran away with a rich heiress in the north. If any minister is found to have engaged in trade, he is to be excluded from the itinerant plan. Ministers are forbidden to issue political circulars addressed to Methodists distinctively. Summary proceedings may be instituted against delinquent ministers without previous notice; and any man who refuses to take his trial, is, *ipso facto*, suspended till the Conference. It is a principal part of the business of the district meeting to examine persons approved by the March quarterly meetings of their respective circuits, and recommended by their respective superintendents, for admission as probationers into the regular ministry. A most searching string of interrogatories is put, relating to their conversion, *present* Christian experience, call to the ministry, proved capability and usefulness in preaching, theological opinions and reading, familiarity with Mr. Wesley's writings, knowledge and approval of the Methodist discipline and readiness to observe and enforce it, belief in the perpetual and universal obligation of the Christian sabbath, and willingness to be employed by the Conference 'in any part of the world.' The following questions are also asked: 'Are you under any matrimonial engagement? Do you take no snuff, tobacco, or drams? Are you free from debt?' Although these

* The superintendent has a kind of archidiaconal authority over the other ministers in his circuit, and over its affairs in general. The other preachers are pledged 'reverently to obey their chief ministers,' which means the superintendent of the circuit, and the chairman of the district.

questions are somewhat precise and minute, and are sometimes, as to some of them at least, evaded, yet their importance is self-evident, and has often been demonstrated in the history of the Connexion. From the days of Mr. Wesley, the Conference has anxiously aimed to guard against the scandals arising from fickleness and flirtations on the part of young ministers in relation to women. On this subject, other denominations might learn a useful lesson from their practice. Some of their rules may seem over-prying, and are doubtless liable to vexatious and annoying abuse; yet, when it is considered that the Connexion takes upon itself the separate maintenance of every minister's wife, and that the usages of Methodism bring her into contact with the interests of the body at nearly as many points as her husband, it is but reasonable that the authorities should have some guarantee for her character being such as will comport with her circumstances; nor ought the prohibition of marriage during the period of ministerial probation (four years), to be invidiously compared to the enforced celibacy of the Romish priesthood, since it would be unreasonable to expect the Conference to support a man's wife until the man himself has been commended to their definitive approval; to say nothing of the *double* disappointment of a rejected candidate, who should have taken to himself a wife on the faith of his acceptance. The aim of the Conference would seem to be, to fulfil, without overstepping, the twofold maxim:—

‘Choose not alone a proper mate,
But proper time to marry.’

We can assure our fair friends, that this part of the Wesleyan practice, so far from being tainted with Malthusian rigour, is dictated quite as much by a tender regard for their sex as by considerations of mere ecclesiastical convenience. There is no class of offenders with whom the body deals more severely than with those who are unfaithful to the vows of love. One of the greatest lights of the Connexion, notwithstanding his high promise, most narrowly escaped exclusion on the charge of having ‘two strings to his bow;’ and we believe that every clear case of positive unfaithfulness is mercilessly visited with the extreme penalty. The law against snuff and tobacco, on the contrary, too frequently terminates in *smoke*. A gentleman who, though now filling high office in the Connexion, is not too old to have been but a boy when it first became the fashion for ‘prentice lads to puff cigars, had contracted the habit of smoking before he began to preach, and well knew that he should be confronted with the tobacco question. ‘I take you to witness,’ said he, on the day of his examination, (and, taking the pipe out of his mouth as he spoke, he laid it on the table,) ‘that I

now give up smoking.' On the strength of this resolution, he boldly faced the testing interrogatory, though how he shaped his negative we cannot precisely say. All we know is, that, before night, he called the same company to witness, (and suited the action to the word,) that he had taken to smoking again!* Similar, though not quite so equivocal, is the story which Adam Clarke (author, by-the-bye, of a pamphlet rivalling King James's 'Counterblast' in its diatribes upon the votaries of the weed) narrates concerning himself. On the day appointed for his final examination by the Conference, he was walking with another minister in the streets of Bristol, when a beggar asked an alms; and, having no copper about him, he borrowed a half-penny of his companion to relieve the case. As he relates, just before the question 'Are you in debt?' came upon him, it flashed across his memory that he had not refunded; but he answered with an air of quiet confidence: 'Not a penny!'

The special examination of probationers is renewed by the district meeting from year to year. Imprimis, each of them is required to deliver to his chairman a list of the books which he has read in the interval,—a regulation which, if it seem rather inquisitorial, has the compensating advantage of fortifying young minds against temptation, and of guarding embryo divines against allowing Dickens and Eugene Sue to rival too much Butler and Howe, while it needs not prevent them from agreeably diversifying Mr. Wesley's Sermons with his 'Harry Earl of Moreland!' Were the questions which the Methodist novice has to answer from year to year compared with Andrew Steinmetz's account of the Jesuits' novitiate, it might be difficult to decide which is the more rigid course of discipline. Those questions imply, among a multitude of other things, that the candidates rise at a certain hour (we believe four in summer and five in winter); that they retire for private devotion at fixed hours twice a day; that they meditate at set times, by a fixed rule; that they fast every Friday, taking water-gruel in the morning, dining on potatoes, and, if they want it, eating three or four ounces of flesh in the evening; that, at other times, they eat no flesh suppers, nor more at each meal than is necessary; and that they drink neither wine nor ale, much less spirits. In the fourth of these annual examinations, each probationer brings himself under promise to 'preach *every morning and evening* when opportunity serves.' We believe opportunity seldom serves, now-a-days, in the *morning*; but

* The late Rev. Daniel Isaac was both a great wag and a great smoker. 'Ha! there you are,' cried a lady, who surprised him one day with a pipe in his mouth, 'at your idol again!' 'Yes, madam,' returned he coolly, 'burning it!'

there are very few *evenings* indeed, on which a Wesleyan minister has not a preaching engagement.

The financial business of the district meeting comprehends the receipt and payment of the Yearly Collection; the investigation of the claims for ordinary deficiencies, (i. e., the excess of liabilities over assets in circuits not able wholly to support themselves,) and the extraordinary deficiencies, (i. e., extra expenses incurred in travelling, by affliction, and other miscellaneous causes); the provisional apportionment of the Children's Fund and the School Fund (for the maintenance and education of ministers' children); the consideration of chapel cases, whether for relief, building, purchase, or enlargement; and the examination of applications for assistance from supernumerary ministers or ministers' widows and orphans.

Various other matters engage the attention of these synodical assemblies. It is their duty to ascertain who of their own number are prepared to engage in foreign missions, what employment each of them has, both on Sundays and on work-days, and what new arrangements are required as to the bounds of each circuit; to make a complete collection of the circuit and district statistics; to elect one of their number to represent the district in the stationing committee at the Conference; and to determine what other ministers shall attend its sittings.

The session of the ordinary district meeting terminates with 'the serious reading and devout consideration of an inimitable compendium of the Wesleyan pastor's duties, drawn up and passed at the Conference of 1820,'—a copious document, which may be regarded as referring, under its thirty distinct heads, to what is desirable rather than to what is attainable. For instance, the resolution to 'have recourse, even in our old established circuits, to the practice of preaching out of doors,' and, 'at least in every large town, to establish weekly meetings for the children of our friends, according to our ancient custom.' This authoritative document contains a passage strikingly indicative of the hierarchical claims of the Wesleyan Conference: 'While we readily and cheerfully protect all our members in meetings in which we preside, in the exercise of such functions as belong to them, according to our laws and general usages, let us not forget that we are under solemn obligations to conduct ourselves on such occasions, not as the mere chairmen of public meetings, but as pastors of Christian societies, put in trust by the ordinance of God, and by their own voluntary association with us, with the scriptural superintendence of their spiritual affairs, and responsible to the Great Head of the church for the faithful discharge of the duties of that trust.'

The *Financial District Meetings* take place in September, and, after having provided for the carrying out of the pecuniary measures of the Conference, arrange for the holding of missionary meetings for the year ensuing.

The *Special District Meeting*, designed for the settlement, subject to appeal on either side, of differences arising during the intervals of Conference, consists of all the ministers of the district in full connexion, with the addition of four other ministers, chosen in equal numbers by the parties in dispute from any portion of the Connexion, with liberty to the president to take the chair, and call in the secretary of the Conference as his official adviser. Mr. Grindrod thus describes the occasions for which this extraordinary tribunal was intended : '1. When a majority of the members of our local tribunals, or circuit courts, are so misled or corrupted as to resist or desert their pastors in the administration of discipline, and set at defiance the constitutional forms of proceeding against offenders. This was the case at Leeds, in 1827.—2. When a preacher, especially a superintendent, has proved notoriously unfaithful to the trust reposed in him, and, abetted by faction, is spreading revolt and rebellion in the societies in which he stood engaged to the Conference to maintain the entire economy of Methodism. Such was the state of things in the First Manchester circuit in 1834-5.*'

The *Mixed District Meeting* is so called from the circumstance of its being composed of ministers and laymen. It is an expedient first suggested by disputes, at the close of the last century, between the trustees of chapels and the preachers appointed to those chapels, in relation to the administration of baptism and the Lord's-supper therein, and to other matters. It is based upon the principle of enabling, on the one hand, the lay officers connected with a particular society or chapel, (for a circuit comprehends several societies and chapels,) to bring to the bar a minister to whom are imputed delinquencies of which his ministerial brethren decline to take official cognizance ; and of protecting, on the other, such accused minister from being summarily ejected from the pulpit on the sole authority of the trustees and other officers connected with the chapel. For this purpose, it is ordered, that, if the majority of the trustees, or the majority of the stewards (deacons) and leaders of any society believe, that any preacher appointed for their circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the rules for the settlement of such disputes as those referred to, they shall have authority to summon the travelling preachers

* Compendium, p. 108.

of the district, and all the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that circuit, to meet in their chapel under the presidency of the chairman of the district; and, if the majority of the meeting are convinced of the justice of the accusation, the offender is to be considered as removed from that circuit, and the district meeting (that is, the ministers apart from the lay officers) may either effect an exchange between him and some other moveable minister, or may suspend him altogether till the Conference.

The *Minor District Meeting* was instituted to meet special cases, in which, to avoid inconvenience, expence, or needless publicity, a select tribunal might be deemed preferable to the convocation of the whole district. It is of two kinds: the first is for the trial of a minister accused of immorality, and for the settlement of differences between two ministers in the same district; the second, to hear appeals from accused members of society against sentence of expulsion, and 'from superintendents of circuits against apparently factious verdicts of leaders' meetings, or for refusing to give any verdict at all.' In all these cases, an appeal lies to the regular district meeting as well as to the Conference. The minor district meeting consists of five ministers; the two parties in dispute choosing two each, and the chairman of the district, or, should he be himself a party, a superintendent chosen by the other members of the court, to preside, with a casting vote. It is worthy of observation, that, in the second sort of minor district meetings, the appeal of a layman is from the sentence of one minister to the judgment of five ministers, two of whom are selected by his accuser; while that of a minister is from the verdict or resolution of a court composed of laymen, to the judgment of a smaller court composed wholly of brother ministers! The same remark applies, and with increased force, when the appeal is carried up to the regular district meeting or to the Conference, both being exclusively ministerial bodies.

We come now to those of the Wesleyan church courts which may be paralleled in the Presbyterian polity, in reference to their composition as well as to their relative place in the ecclesiastical scheme. The highest of these is the *Quarterly Meeting*. As the Presbytery of Edinburgh is composed of the ministers and officers residing in that city, so the Wesleyan quarterly meeting of Edinburgh is composed of the ministers and lay officers within the bounds of the circuit of which that city is the centre. This meeting forms, in one respect, a singular exception to the Wesleyan economy, in which, for the most part, everything is strictly defined. We find nothing in the books, however, defining the composition of the quarterly meeting, which varies according to local circumstances. In some cir-

cuits, it is a kind of open meeting, at which even non-official members may be present; but, in general, it extends or is confined to the officers in the circuit, consisting of ministers, local (or lay) preachers, trustees, stewards, and leaders. In former times, this meeting used to turn its attention to all sorts of subjects, and, in periods of excitement, afforded an opportunity to the laity, of expressing, through their officers, their opinions and feelings, not only concerning matters peculiarly affecting their own circuit, but also on the affairs of other circuits, and of the whole Connexion. Mr. Grindrod, who had had bitter experience of the troublesome interference of *undisciplined* quarterly meetings, contends, not simply for restricting them within the narrow sphere of their own circuits, and prohibiting them from expressions of connexional sympathy, but also for reducing their component parts to more manageable dimensions. 'That trustees, local preachers, and class-leaders, should be *represented* by members of their own bodies, at the quarterly meeting; is readily admitted; but that all persons filling those offices should be at liberty to exercise its franchise, [although *all* the ministers* and *all* the stewards are,] is neither a right nor a safe state of things. In times of peace and tranquillity, [as though the Wesleyan Connexion were a body politic, and must be *governed* accordingly,] no serious inconvenience results from this loose and undefined composition of our quarterly meetings; but, in those *periods of agitation* to which our connexional principle seems to render us liable, its consequences are often very painful and injurious.'† The Conference, sympathizing in the views here expressed, has not indeed attempted a rigid definition as to the composition of this important meeting, (the time for doing that does not seem to have yet arrived,) but has narrowed the sphere of its operations: and accordingly we read, that the quarterly meetings 'have [now] no right to interfere with the affairs or disputes of any other circuit than their own;' and that 'they cannot now [even] address the Conference by memorial, or otherwise, on general connexional matters; that *privilege* (!) being, by the regulations of 1835, [made in consequence of the last 'period of agitation,'] intrusted to our special

* If any minister be obliged to withdraw from a quarterly meeting during the transaction of its business, (although many points may arise, during the discussion of which, delicacy would dictate his voluntary withdrawal,) the meeting is, *ipso facto*, dissolved; and he himself, for consenting to withdraw, liable to due censure at the ensuing Conference. Moreover, the Conference recommends it to the superintendents of circuits to invite, on all important occasions, [i.e., whenever a disturbance is apprehended,] the chairmen of their respective districts to be present at their quarterly meetings!

† Compendium, p. 129.

circuit meetings,*—of which hereafter. The quarterly meeting never did possess any judicial authority. Its proper business is with the financial affairs of the circuit. It audits the accounts of the stewards, adjusts the claims on the Contingent Fund for the consideration of the district meeting, and deliberates on proposals for chapel building, enlarging, etc. Large circuits cannot be divided into smaller without its approval, which is also necessary before the superintendent can propose a candidate for the regular ministry to the Conference.† It may likewise suspend, for one year, in its own circuit, the operation of any new rule enacted by that assembly, but without ‘making it a cause of contention;’ and it has ‘a right to petition the Conference, from year to year, on the appointment of preachers’ to the circuit; but the circuit stewards, themselves the nominees of the superintendent, ‘possess exclusively (according to Mr. Grindrod) the right of nomination.’

The *Special Circuit Meeting*, according to Mr. Grindrod, was principally designed ‘to afford to the well-affected and peaceable portion of our lay-officers, reasonable facilities for expressing their views and opinions on connexional interests to the Conference.’‡ This new court is thus constituted. After the close of the June quarterly meeting in every year, the superintendent is enjoined to detain all the stewards present; (the stewards being his own nominees, and holding office, not, like the leaders, during good behaviour, but only from year to year;) to ascertain from them, whether, in that circuit, there is any considerable dissatisfaction with any existing rules, or any prevalent desire for new ones; and, if a majority or considerable proportion of them answer in the affirmative, and are of opinion that the occasion demands the calling of a special circuit meeting, the superintendent is directed and required to summon it. It is to consist of all the regular ministers in the circuit, (in full work or supernumerary,) of the circuit stewards, of the town stewards, of country stewards in the proportion of one for each society of fifty members or upwards, of all men class-leaders and local

* Compendium, p. 29.

† ‘If, on mature deliberation, it is the conscientious conviction of a majority of the members of a quarterly meeting, in any given instance, that the person proposed to them does not possess the requisite qualifications, and they do therefore pronounce such a judgment, the superintendent’s nomination is, as a matter of course, set aside, and he cannot proceed, in that case, *that year*; if, on the other hand, a majority declare in favour of the candidate, their jurisdiction then terminates, and *the ultimate disposal of him from that time rests with the ministry*. In no case does the quarterly meeting propose or recommend; its province is merely to approve or reject the nomination of the superintendent.’—Grindrod, p. 25.

‡ Ibid., p. 159.

preachers of ten years' continuous and uninterrupted standing in their offices, and of the trustees of the town chapels, and one trustee of each of the country chapels, (if settled on the Conference plan,) being members of society ; the superintendent to take the chair *ex-officio*, or, in his absence, some other minister appointed by him. The only power entrusted to the court thus constituted, is that of memorialising the Conference,—a power to be exercised within the following limitations. The superintendent must have three days' notice of the specific point to be mooted, otherwise the meeting falls to the ground ; all memorials are to be confined to such changes only as are ‘consistent with the essential principles of Wesleyan Methodism, and within the pale of our established constitution ;’ the special meeting of one circuit is not to intermeddle with the affairs or proceedings of any other circuit (the Conference as well as the State having its *Correspondence Laws*);* and, lastly, the rules sought to be repealed, altered, or enacted, are to be such only as relate to ‘the government of the societies at large ;’ ‘for,’ adds the Conference, ‘the disciplinary jurisdiction of the preachers over each other, and their right of regulating among themselves all that relates peculiarly and specifically to the Christian ministry and the pastoral office, are *not to be considered as subjects open to the official interference by memorial of the meetings so constituted.*’ Such are the ‘reasonable facilities’ afforded to the Wesleyan body for acting upon their hierarchy. For example : the expulsion of members on the sole authority of the minister is regarded as ‘an essential principle,’ a part of the ‘established constitution,’ peculiarly and specifically relating to ‘the pastoral office :’ consequently, an alteration in this respect can never even be discussed in a regular meeting of Wesleyans !†

The *Leaders' Meeting* may be compared to the kirk session of

* ‘How different the law of Conference Methodism from what might be expected to exist in a ‘*connexion* !’ One would suppose, that, if one part of a connexion suffered, or thought itself to be oppressed, that, at least after it had made its appeal to the preachers in the district meeting, and to the Conference, the case might be made known to and considered in the official meetings of other circuits, for the purpose of their expressing, in a proper way, their opinion to the Conference. Happily, such liberty is allowed to the subjects of this realm, in all cases, as to the law of the land and its highest administration. But it is absolutely forbidden in Conference Methodism !’—*Eckett*, p. 48.

† Mr. Eckett's pamphlet contains a masterly exposure of the futile character of this new-fangled contrivance for more effectually suppressing the complaints of the people, under pretence of providing an opportunity for their utterance. How, he asks, are the stewards to know that there is considerable dissatisfaction, or a strong and extensive wish for change, when every means is adopted to prevent discussion ? Why, again, is the new meeting restricted to four days out of the three hundred and sixty-five,

Presbyterians; only the latter has larger powers. This Wesleyan court is composed of the class-leaders, men and women, connected with each society, or chapel, in a circuit. There may be, consequently, as many leaders' meetings in a circuit as there are societies or chapels; a society consisting of those church members in regular attendance at any one chapel. The class-leaders of a circuit have no aggregate meeting. The leaders' meetings are held weekly. The superintendent, or other ministers of the circuit, preside over them, and the connexion of the society-steward with the administration of the Poor's Fund gives him a seat in the meeting. The following are the powers and duties of those who compose the leaders' meeting. Leaders and stewards can be neither appointed nor removed from office without their consent to the nomination or judgment of the superintendent in each case; 'excepting,' as Mr. Grindrod states, 'when the crime proved merits exclusion from membership; in which case, the superintendent [who is the sole judge] can, at once, depose the offender from office and expel him from the society.* The leaders are to inform the minister of any that are sick, or that walk disorderly, and to pay over to the stewards their week's class-money, exhibiting their books; and the ministers are to examine those books, both in order to ascertain the attendance of the members on their classes, and also in order to see that the weekly contributions have been duly paid for the support of the gospel, or, in other words, for their own maintenance. The morality, punctuality, etc., of all the leaders, are made the special subject of half-yearly inquiry. The leaders' meeting have a right to declare any person on trial (probation) improper to be received into society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent cannot admit the person; but, remarks Mr. Grindrod, 'the power to admit still rests with the pastors. The leaders have a power, *when appealed to*, to say who shall *not* be admitted into society; but it is for their ministers to say who *shall* be admitted.' As to the exclusion of members from the society, the general rule is, 'that no person shall be expelled for immorality, till such immorality be proved *i.e.*, to not less than seven, nor more than ten days from the day of the June quarterly meeting? Then, the superintendent, or his deputy, can at any time dissolve the meeting by vacating the chair, the meeting having no power to appoint a chairman. If a memorial be adopted, it must be signed 'forthwith,' and placed 'immediately' in the superintendent's hands, without receiving the signatures of absent parties. But what with the formalities imposed, and the limitations fixed, Mr. Eckett is of opinion, that, while, on the one hand, there is no chance of a meeting, on the other there is nothing left open for discussion, 'what is given by one breath of the Conference, being taken away by its successor.'—Pp. 49—57. And yet how plausible the representation made by Mr. Rule in pages 78—9, of his 'Wesleyan Methodism!'

* Compendium, p. 140.

to the satisfaction of a leaders' meeting.' But, in 1835, the Conference adopted some voluminous regulations on the subject, of which, as the point is one of importance, and one which strikingly illustrates the genius of Wesleyan Methodism, it shall be our care to present an accurate analysis.

The superintendent may, if he think proper, exclude a member from society '*quietly*', and as a matter of course, by the preacher's withholding his society-ticket, and erasing his name from the class-book.* Among the special grounds of exclusion are enumerated, marrying with an unbeliever, keeping or hiring a dancing-master, dealing in accommodation bills, and fraudulent bankruptcy. But the excommunicated party may demand a trial at the leaders' meeting of the particular society with which he was connected. If a majority of the leaders shall be satisfied that sufficient proof is adduced to establish the facts alleged against the individual, and shall give a verdict to that effect, then the leaders' meeting has discharged its whole part, and the case is left in the hands of the superintendent, on whom devolves the sole right and duty of deciding on the measures to be adopted towards the offender in consequence of the verdict of the leaders' meeting. 'These duties and functions the Conference can on no account consent to abandon, or permit to be frittered away; for that would seriously endanger *** * *the rights, liberties, and spiritual privileges of our people!*' afterwards explained to mean 'the *protection* of an accused individual from the effects of personal prejudice and irritation,' etc.; thereby implying, that a member whom the superintendent may have already excluded previously to his appeal to the leaders' meeting, requires the protection of the said superintendent (dispassionate man!) from the personal prejudices of the one or two dozen leaders to whom he has himself appealed! No sentence of expulsion, however, is to be pronounced by the all-powerful superintendent in the same meeting of the leaders as the trial, nor until at least one week after. In difficult or doubtful cases, he is directed not to pronounce sentence without *privately* asking information from individual leaders, or other members of society! In every case of proposed expulsion, he is also to consult his own colleagues. The expelled member,

* 'As a specimen of the nature of Methodistical rules, for the disregard of which members of the society may become thus subject to excommunication, I again quote the following:—'Let no man, nor number of men, in our Connexion, on any account or occasion, circulate letters, call meetings, do or attempt to do anything new, till it has first been appointed by the Conference.' Now, since the passing of the rules of 1835, some members have been put on trial charged only with violating this rule, (which, I confess, appears to me to outrage all decency,) and for its alleged violation have been expelled.'—*Eckell*, pp. 37-8.

having appealed in vain to the powerless leaders' meeting, may prosecute his appeal, if he pleases, to the district meeting, (which may be an appeal from one minister to forty,) and, failing there, to the Conference (an appeal from forty ministers to four hundred). But, if he prefers it, he may, in the first instance, carry his case before a minor district meeting, as described above, with whose decision the appellant may either rest satisfied or appeal onwards to the regular district meeting and the Conference, the like privilege being reserved for the reverend respondent. Reverse the case, and suppose that the leaders' meeting either return a verdict unfavourable to the superintendent's views, or, disapproving of his conduct in the matter, decline to return any verdict at all. In this case, the Conference affords 'the same facilities of redress to a superintendent' as to an excluded member; namely, appeal to a minor district meeting; only it does not clearly appear, whether,—two of the four brother ministers, who, in addition to the *ministerial* chairman, become thus the judges of his quarrel with the (*lay*) leaders, having been selected by himself,—the other two are to be appointed by the leaders, by the individual they have dared to 'protect' from 'the effects of personal prejudice or irritation,' by the complaining superintendent, or by whom else. If the minor district meeting fail in satisfying either party, the way lies open for appeal to the superior courts, terminating with the Conference.

The document here analysed, like all the more modern acts of the Conference, presents a singularly wordy combination of preamble, enactment, and proviso, with exposition, paraphrase, reasoning, declamation, and hortation. The smallest fry could not well escape through the meshes of a net like this; in which we read, 'The New Testament *law of purity*,*' etc., its often repeated *law of peace and godly quietness*, and its *laws of courtesy, brotherly kindness*, and mutual *charity*, as well as its direction that 'all things' should 'be done decently and in order,' and its requirement of reasonable submission, on the part of church members, to the scriptural 'rule' of those who are 'over them in the Lord,'—these are *standing enactments* of the gospel, binding on all Christian communities, and therefore binding on the Methodist societies, without exception. ANY OBSTINATE VIOLATION OF THEM MUST BE SUITABLY VISITED,' etc. We leave our intelligent readers to form their own opinion of a system of discipline like this.

The *Local Preachers' Meeting* is composed, as the name imports, of local preachers; that is to say, of those individuals in each circuit, who, not devoting themselves wholly to the mi-

* The *italics* are as in the original text of the Conference Minutes.

nistry, or, rather, not changing their place of abode or relinquishing their secular avocations, consent, without fee or reward, and often without being refunded expenses out of pocket, to supply the pulpits of the circuit according to appointment from sabbath to sabbath, and sometimes on week-nights also. Of this truly meritorious order of Christian ministers, the Rev. John Gordon, now a Unitarian minister at Coventry, but formerly a Wesleyan minister, bore the following testimony at a recent meeting of the Unitarian Association. He was stating the reasons that led him to expect considerable accessions from the Wesleyan body :—‘ The other ground on which he rested his opinion was, the peculiar constitution of Methodism in raising up a body of local teachers in every circuit or division. There was thus formed a strong body of individuals accustomed on every sabbath-day to occupy the pulpit in places of worship. They were thinking men, so far as matters of religion were concerned; and there was no other sect in the kingdom possessed of such a body of men, habituated to reflect on subjects of this kind. People were disposed to look upon Methodists as an ignorant body of men; but he could tell them, that, so far as his own experience went, he never knew a Methodist circuit where there was not some individual connected with the local preachers able to read the Greek Testament in the original—(hear). Therefore he thought that he was right in saying, that Unitarianism, when it could get hold among such a body of men as this, was more likely to spread among them than in any other class of the Christian community.’

The local preachers meet quarterly, under the presidency of the superintendent, supported by his ministerial colleagues. Local preachers are appointed at this meeting, after six months’ probation, on which they cannot enter without the superintendent’s sanction, and during which it is his duty to hear them preach at least one sermon. If, after due examination before the assembled brethren, *the superintendent is persuaded* that a candidate possesses suitable qualifications, he proposes him to the meeting, who may accept or reject the nomination according to their views. Although travelling preachers are exempted from meeting in class, local preachers are not excused from so doing. No local preacher is allowed to preach in another circuit without producing a note of recommendation from his own superintendent, and having the consent of the other. Neither can a local preacher hold a love-feast without his superintendent’s consent; and, although we find no direct inhibition, we know that they are never permitted to administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the celebration of which is, by rule, confined to ministers in full connexion. They are responsible to their

own meeting for their official conduct, and undergo examination every quarter as to character, faith, and duties; but, as private members of the society, they are subject, in common with all others, to the jurisdiction of the superintendent and of the leaders' meetings to which they respectively belong. The state of the congregations to which they minister, (chiefly, though not always, in the villages,) is inquired into, and the superintendent consults with them as to putting new places upon the Plan. The 'Plan' is a tabular arrangement of the supplies for all the chapels in a circuit during a quarter or half a year; from which it may be seen at a glance by what minister or local preacher any pulpit will be supplied on any Sunday or other day of the period. The appointments are at the discretion of the superintendent, who, however, may consult the feelings both of his immediate colleagues and of the local preachers. These last are very numerous, and are, if possible, more essential to the operations of Wesleyanism than even their ordained, and therefore 'reverend' brethren.

The *Trustees' Meeting* deserves notice as a further exemplification of the centralising principle of the Wesleyan Conference, which, through its superintendents, exerts a paramount authority and control over every department. The trustees, alone, have to do with nothing but the execution of their trusts. They must be members of the society, and their trust deeds must be according to the Conference plan; by which they incur heavy personal liabilities on the good faith of that body, (though, of course, with their eyes open to the fact,) the Conference not only reserving to itself full authority to dictate where, when, and how each chapel shall be built, by whom it shall be occupied, under what circumstances it shall be altered, enlarged, sold, or mortgaged; but also decreeing that its superintendent ministers shall, *ex officio*, be the chairmen in all the trustee meetings of their respective circuits, and shall exercise, either in person or by deputy, the ample controlling powers studiously secured to them by deed. The pew-rents generally go to meet the interest of borrowed money and other trust liabilities, which on Wesleyan chapels are notoriously heavy. The trustees can never acquire the right of appointing to chapels, except in certain very remote contingencies,—such, for example, as the utter extinction of the Conference. It being necessary to insure an adequate supply of responsible trustees, they are, as a class, regarded with more consideration than ordinary members. A local preacher, as we have seen, is liable to expulsion by the superintendent, especially if confirmed by the adverse verdict of a leaders' meeting; but, according to a rule enacted when the trustees made a formidable demonstration of independence

(1794), and which the Conference, notwithstanding the Leeds and Manchester schisms, has not ventured to alter, ‘no trustee, (*however accused, or defective in conforming to the rules of the society,*) shall be removed from the society, unless his crime, or breach of the rules of the society, be proved *in the presence* of the trustees and leaders.’ For leaving this vague rule unaltered, however, there may be more reasons than one. Cases have occurred of a superintendent getting rid of a troublesome trustee, by contending that he (the superintendent) was the sole judge whether he had proved his own charges, and exercising his high prerogative accordingly.

Having unavoidably devoted so much space to a view of the *disciplinary apparatus* of the Wesleyan Connexion, we shall be obliged to glance but very cursorily at those institutions which develop its *financial arrangements and resources*. The Conference makes no boast of its voluntaryism, but contrives, on the contrary, to let it be known to ministers of state, colonial assemblies, municipal corporations, and other public bodies, that ‘the smallest contribution will be thankfully accepted,’ provided its most perfect hierarchy be not impinged upon. Still the Wesleyans quite outvie all other denominations, unless we except the Roman Catholics, in the practical development of the voluntary principle. The immense amount of their chapel and other real property, which has been estimated at more than three millions sterling, is entirely the result of this principle; while the annual revenue of the body, from every source, is probably not much less than a million. The income of their missionary society for the year 1845-6, was more than £112,000.; in 1840, by a mighty effort, £171,687 of chapel debts was extinguished; and the Centenary Fund fell little short of a quarter of a million. Of the product of the weekly pence and quarterly shillings (these are *minima*) contributed in the classes, of the Yearly Collection made in the same way, and of the July Collection in all the congregations, some conception may be formed, when it is known that they suffice for the maintenance in far greater *average comfort* than any other body of Christian ministers (the clergy of the Established Church not excepted), of more than fifteen hundred ministers, with their wives and families.* To all these sources of income, may be added the profits of the Book-room, the Theological Institution Fund, the Children’s Fund, the General Chapel and Education Fund, and the Worn-out Ministers’ and Ministers’ Widows’ Auxiliary Fund, with legacies, and other occasional contributions. All the funds of the Connexion are managed by mixed committees of ministers and laymen; but the ministers invariably preponderate, and every connexional

* Perhaps no *married* minister receives less than an equivalent to £175 per annum; perhaps none more than £350.

committee is appointed by the sole authority of the Conference.*

The Missionary Society is entirely under the control of the Conference, by whom its officers, committee, and deputations, are appointed. The deputations are found useful in promoting the disciplinary purposes of the leaders of the Connexion, while they also keep alive and extend the missionary spirit. There are not many towns, and not a great number of villages, to which the indefatigable ROBERT NEWTON is not familiar as a missionary agent, and probably not many scores of villages in England in which the annual Wesleyan missionary meeting does not compete in interest and excitement with the time-honoured fair or wake. It is worthy of remark, that the agents of the society abroad carry out, wherever they go, every part of the connexional discipline; with what effect may be judged of from the fact that nearly one-tenth of its income is derived from extra-British auxiliaries. Its missionaries are found in every part of the globe. Whithersoever other societies have gone, there are they, and in not a few places besides. The Wesleyan missionary society is an Irish evangelical society, a continental missionary society, a colonial missionary society, and a foreign missionary society, all in one, and all under one uniform management. And when, through failing health, or other causes not demanding censure, the Wesleyan missionary returns from his post, he is not discarded, or left to shift for himself, but is recognised as a member of the Conference, and receives an appointment to a home circuit so soon as that assembly meets. The Centenary Hall sufficiently attests the grandeur of this noble institution, which employs a greater number of missionaries and receives a larger income than any sister society.

* Mr. Grindrod says, (Introduction, p. xv.) 'Laymen have been admitted to their full share of power in the distribution of all our public funds. Committees, of which they are component parts, have been appointed, * * * and to their decision all cases of mere finance are referred. * * * The maxim on which our fathers acted, has been carried out by their sons in the gospel to a much greater extent: "spiritual matters belong to the preachers, and temporal to the people." Mr. Eckett says, (p. 35,) "It is stated in the Address, that the missionary fund, the general chapel fund, and the school fund, are "generally expended under the superintendence of *mixed* committees." The members of those committees, however, are all elected exclusively by the Conference. * * The committee [appointed to appropriate the funds allotted by the Conference for ordinary and extraordinary deficiencies] consists of twenty-four itinerant preachers and seventeen laymen. As to the preachers' auxiliary fund, it is arranged that the committee of its distribution shall consist of sixteen preachers and twelve laymen, all of whom are appointed by the Conference. * * * It is most certain, that all the connexional funds are as effectually managed by the preachers, as if no laymen were on any of their committees. The preachers constitute a majority of each of the committees, and the laymen are either directly or indirectly appointed by the preachers.' See, also, on this subject, 'Fly Sheets,' No. II., p. 19.

Nor does the Theological Institution, with its two colleges, the one containing forty students, the other thirty-four, speak less favourably for the improving taste, as well as the sustained energy, of the Wesleyan Church. The Richmond edifice is the admiration of all beholders, and, although in some respects the committee have had successive trials to contend with, yet the classical and theological tutors, both ministers of the general body, are gentlemen whose proved characters and respectable attainments afford every guarantee for the efficient management and complete success of the college. At Didsbury, the Conference has been still more fortunate, the amiable and learned Dr. Hannah being most esteemed where he is best known.

Kingswood and Woodhouse-grove Schools are of more ancient date than the theological seminaries. The former of the two, indeed, was established by Mr. Wesley himself, and the latter was added early in the present century. These institutions are sustained by special subscriptions, and by an annual collection in all the chapels, not unaided by the contributions of the ministers themselves, and are wholly devoted to the instruction of their sons. In each of them provision is made for about a hundred scholars, who enter at the age of eight, and quit on attaining fourteen, being, in the mean time, educated, boarded, and clothed, at the expense of the several establishments. Each school has efficient masters, and is under the superintendence of a senior minister, who takes the title of Governor. The education, in both classics and mathematics, is quite equal, so far as it can go with boys of fourteen, to that given at the first-rate public grammar schools; and extensive observation enables us to add, that nearly all the *alumni* of these excellent seminaries find their way into the superior walks of commercial or professional life. Not a few of them have become the chief ornaments of their paternal order, while no inconsiderable number have completed at Oxford and Cambridge the literary career commenced at Kingswood and Woodhouse-grove. There is no point on which an honest Wesleyan will be found so sore as on this. He will tell you, with tears in his eyes, that the professor of pastoral theology in the university of Oxford is a Kingswood scholar, and that the professors of theology at Richmond and Didsbury have each of them a son, who has graduated at Oxford, and has there learned to regard his venerable father as an ‘unauthorised teacher.’ And yet, strange to say,

The directors of the Wesleyan Proprietary school at Sheffield have made it a *sine qua non*, that the head master shall be a graduate of either Oxford or Cambridge, while, absurdly enough, the governor and chaplain is a plain, but distinguished Woodhouse-grove boy. At Taunton, where there is a similar establishment, the

proprietary body have displayed more consistency ; and hence the office of instructors is in that valuable institution filled with able men who were themselves educated in the connexional academies. We believe it is in contemplation to set up other schools of this order in various parts of the kingdom, where the sons of influential and affluent Wesleyans may receive an education in harmony with the predilections of their parents. In Dublin, this has already been effected.

Nor, while providing instruction for their own sons, and promoting plans for the better education of the sons of their wealthier hearers, have the Wesleyan ministers been neglectful of the interests of the poor. The last return shows, that they have established more than four thousand Sunday schools, with nearly eighty-two thousand teachers, and five hundred thousand scholars. At the close of 1843, it was determined, within seven years, to form at least seven hundred day schools ; and, in less than half that period, the determination has been more than half carried into effect. These schools are conducted on the Glasgow system. The religious instruction given in Wesleyan schools of every class, is strictly denominational ; so that they may be expected to propagate and maintain the evil as well as the good which characterizes a sect in which these elements are more largely mingled than perhaps in any other religious system of ancient or modern times.

In dismissing the subject of Wesleyan education, we are reminded of a feature in the financial economy of the body which shows with what skill and nicety it is managed. We allude to the constitution and apportionment of the Children's Fund,—a fund from which ministers receive something for the maintenance of each of their children, from birth to the age of twenty. The total probable number of children to be provided for, is annually supposed, and calculation made on this basis of the number of members in society that should provide for one child. At the last Conference, the result was one hundred and thirty-four members to one child. This mode of distribution equalizes the burden ; and, whereas men with large families were formerly objects of dread to circuits of moderate resources, they are now in a position which prevents either party from seeming to cast a doubt upon the declaration, ‘ Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them ! ’

The Book-room is an important establishment. Its officers consist of a book-steward (who must be a minister), a corps of editors (also ministers), and a committee (all of whom are ministers). These are the guardians and dispensers of the denominational literature, which they watch over with at least sufficient jealousy. Besides a host of magazines, which Dr. Campbell's

successful experiments have confessedly multiplied,* they continually bring out new editions to meet perpetual new demands for the standard works of the Connexion. The publications of the book-room are put into circulation through the superintendents, who have 12½ per cent. on all sales effected. The number of religious tracts, on which no profit is allowed to the superintendents, issued in 1841, was 1,326,049. All aspiring Wesleyan authors who seek denominational patronage, are glad to bring out their brochures with the official *imprimatur*; but it is by no means granted indiscriminately. Some of the finest works that ever came from a Wesleyan pen are in the *index expurgatorius* of the book-committee. They may perhaps sell, but they certainly declined publishing, Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary. Their refusals are not always taken very quietly—*genus irritabile vatūm!* Brother B——, who was a rather ostentatious gentleman, had written a book about something or other, which he offered to the book-room. After waiting till his patience was fairly exhausted for an answer, he made peremptory application for the return of his manuscript, declaring, with manifest indignation, that he would publish it on his own bottom. The official of that day, who was a bit of a wag, drily replied, that, in his opinion, he could not do better!

We close our enumeration of the economical arrangements of Wesleyanism, by mentioning the Committee of Privileges, with which the successful opposition to Sir James Graham's Factories Education Bill and to Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst's Charitable Trusts Bill, has made the public familiar. This important and watchful body enjoys the able assistance of several gentlemen learned in the law, among whom we have no difficulty in recognizing some who may, perchance, have robbed a bird's nest in Esholt Wood, or bathed in the fast-flowing Aire.

The Wesleyan Methodists are strongly attached to their own modes of worship and means of grace; and, in this respect, there yet exists considerable, perhaps insuperable opposition of sentiment, between the bulk of the people and at least their leading ministers. The ruling party have long cherished a desire to introduce into all the chapels the regular church service. In the metropolis, and in some of the chapels in a few large towns, the morning service is constantly used, but nowhere the evening. So sensible is the Conference that read prayers are generally obnoxious to the Wesleyans, that it has never yet ventured to go beyond a 'recommendation' of their adoption. Various indications show, however, that its motto is *Nil desperandum*. Portions of the burial, baptismal, marriage, communion, and

* 'Early Days' has already reached 50,000 monthly: what may it not be in later times!

ordination services, are used on appropriate occasions ; and, by way of accustoming the people to the full service, its use has by recent enactment been made obligatory, on certain great occasions during the sittings of the Conference, when those two 'grand metropolitans of all the tribe,' the president and the ex-president, are the principal officiators. The stealthy multiplication of organs, and the gradual introduction of chants in the form of tunes adapted to metrical hymns, are also probably designed to pave the way for the more complete churchification of the body. The genius of the Methodist people, however, must be wholly changed before this can be effected. Even in City-road chapel, where, until within a few years, the prayers had been read from the beginning by ordained clergymen, it has never been found possible to get the congregation together much before the conclusion of the prayers and the commencement of the extempore services. No class of nonconformists are more strongly attached to free prayer than the Methodists, whose notions of its exercise, moreover, are such as to make it more difficult for them than for any other class to reconcile themselves to forms of prayer. Let any man enter a Wesleyan chapel in those districts where Wesleyanism has its strongholds ; and the tone of the minister's prayers, with the multiform responses of the congregation, will convince him that they could not easily be drilled into the icy fervours of a tautologous litany. The wrestling style of the minister, excited to a pitch of agony by the sympathetic interjections of his hearers, forms the greatest possible contrast to the parrot-like monotony of a decent liturgy. Nor is it always necessary that the minister should himself be loud and obstreporous, to inspire the people with enthusiasm. We remember being in Brunswick Chapel, Liverpool, (a very elegant structure, and filled with a very genteel congregation,) when the late Mr. Pipe, a remarkably mild and quiet man, was offering up the concluding prayer. In a strain of deep solemnity he was imploring the Divine Being to assist the congregation in repelling the assaults of Satan, when a man, in a conspicuous part of the place, shouted out at the top of his voice, 'Ey ! punch him i' t' guts, Lord !' Such *naïve* and energetic comments are frequent and diversified during prayer ; nor, even during sermon, can the warm and simple-hearted people always restrain themselves from throwing in an approving observation. A minister was one day preaching to a country congregation, in Yorkshire, on the forgiveness of injuries, and had just remarked, that the best way of disposing of one's enemies was, not to slay them with the sword, but to kill them with kindness, when an honest man in the gallery rapturously exclaimed in a loud voice, 'Ey ! that 's t'reightway, lad !' But this feature in the Wesleyan character is most

fully brought out at love-feasts. These gatherings are exceedingly popular in most parts of the Connexion, and many a Wesleyan will, in all weathers, walk a dozen miles rather than miss a love-feast. What renders them attractive is, the sort of saturnalian license allowed in them. Any person present, male or female, is permitted to rise and make a declaration of personal experience. Some of the narratives thus given are deeply affecting, others are rather grotesque. In many circuits, there is a class of people who seize upon these occasions for cutting a figure. While one of them tells his oft-repeated tale, the rest, like claqueurs at a play, support him with their plaudits. We have more than once heard 'loud cheering' at a Wesleyan love-feast, intermingled with individual cries of 'Weel dunc, Joe, lad!' 'Praise God, Thomas!' We scarcely dare give specimens of the more *outré* speeches uttered on these occasions, lest too extensive an inference should be drawn from them. Let one suffice. A woman, with every appearance of sincerity as well as earnestness, was relating, that, on the morning of that very day, she had risen betimes for private devotions, which she conducted so audibly as to wake her husband, who upbraided her with having got up at a needlessly early hour, and desired her to return to bed. She continued, however, in prayer, and presently, to conclude the narrative in her own words, 't'Holy Sperrit cam intul my sowl like watter gangin' out o'n a bottle, goggle, goggle, goggle!' 'Praise the Lord, lass!' immediately resounded from a hundred voices, while a sympathising murmur ran through the whole audience. Scenes like these, though not unusual enough, even in the largest towns; to occasion surprise, are, of course, much more frequent in rural districts, where language and manners are less polished and more simple. But they are not universal; still less are they universally approved. They meet with the most indulgent toleration from those ministers who are themselves warm-hearted men, while others of a graver character and more refined and dignified demeanour embrace suitable opportunities of keeping them in check. The late Mr. Stephens was a minister of this stamp. This excellent man, of whom we can give no better idea than by saying, that he much resembled the Rev. William Jay, was in the Leeds circuit during a period of religious excitement. Every night prayer-meetings of an enthusiastic description, were held in the chapel over which he had special jurisdiction, and were protracted to a late hour, a practice which he felt it his duty publicly to rebuke. Near midnight, his tall figure, crowned with an erect tuft of greyish hair, was seen rising above the pews, and, on a break in the rapid succession of spontaneous prayers, his solemn voice was heard pronouncing the Benedic-

tion. This hint not being taken, he followed it up with a strong intimation of his opinion, that it was more than time for the parties present to be surrounding their family altars. Even this was disregarded; when, quite losing patience, he declared it to be his conviction, that no *good* spirit could actuate heads of families in such neglect of domestic duties. The words were hardly uttered, when a pert little fellow, one of the foremost of the revivalists, jumped upon a bench, and, with his arms a-kimbo, called out, 'If t' divvel be here, he's i' thy toppin'!' This impudent sally turned, as we say, the laugh against Mr. Stephens, who wisely ceased contending with them. Upon the whole, it may be doubted whether the Wesleyan ministers take sufficient pains to regulate the ebullitions of untutored zeal. We do not forget the depths of moral degradation from which Wesleyanism has raised the miners of Cornwall and the colliers of Newcastle; but, notwithstanding the rudeness of the materials to be wrought upon, we question whether the softening influence which true religion, still more than other civilizing agencies, must exert upon the human character, has in such quarters been exhausted. If, however, we wish to know what is the present feeling of the Wesleyan Conference with regard to scenes of noise and excitement under the notion of revivals, we have only to follow the peregrinations of the Rev. Mr. Caughey, whose religious orgies have attracted the ridicule of the gay and the lamentations of the serious. From the towns which he has visited,—Hull, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, and others,—it is evident, that his extravaganzas are sanctioned by authority. Now, we have read an account of his exhibitions at Birmingham, written, not by an enemy to religion, but by a devout Christian; and we affirm without hesitation, that scenes just as questionable are of familiar occurrence in most parts of the Connexion during periods of excitement. Mr. Caughey may regard himself as an extraordinary person; but we can assure him that his most wonderful exploits might easily be paralleled by incidents in the lives of such men as David Stoner, William Bramwell, and (the late) John Smith. Far be it from us, however, to question the genuineness of Methodist revivals. There are tares among the wheat. Some hasty professions of conversion may be made, which are as hastily falsified. In other cases, hypocrisy may put on the garb of earnestness. But the more villainous the counterfeit, the more valuable the true coin. It is not worth while to imitate the less precious metals. The genuineness of Methodist revivals may be tested by their fruits; and we could easily put our fingers upon some of the most eminent men in

the body, who professed to be converted in boyhood at a revival, and who have never swerved from that profession.

Hitherto we have sketched only, or chiefly, the more obvious features of Wesleyan character. Let it not be supposed, that noise, bluster, and coarseness, are its predominant traits. While there is no lack of audible responses during public prayer, yet there is much also of 'the speechless awe that dares not move.' While Wesleyan ministers know how to preach excitingly, and possess a peculiar facility in getting at the hearts of their hearers, they are not less remarkable for being able to sound the depths of Christian experience, to elucidate and enforce the practical bearing of Christian doctrine, and to feed the church of God. And, after all that has been said to the contrary, much observation and some experience have convinced us, that the more private means of grace which the Wesleyan Connexion has more largely provided and more sedulously cultivated than any other modern denomination of Christians, are admirably adapted to promote the growth of religious character, and bring it to a ripe maturity. The Class-meeting has been much maligned by enemies and misunderstood by less unfriendly critics. It is as remote as possible from the popish confessional. It is neither more nor less than a meeting expressly for prayer and religious conversation. Much reason have we dissenters to regret that we have no similar means of mutual edification. We have our social parties, it is true; and religious topics are casually introduced; but, as it is not *understood* that we meet for religious conversation, we consume the hours in miscellaneous chat. Now, the Methodist class-meeting shuts you up to religious topics; and so, in general, the hour is well spent. A great deal, no doubt, depends upon the leaders; and the ministers, by whom they are nominated, are under some temptation to select men who will be easily controlled, instead of looking wholly to their fitness for directing a religious conversation, and giving religious counsel in a diversity of cases. But, under the guidance of a judicious person, we cannot conceive of a device better adapted than the Methodist class-meeting to promote the ends of personal religion. We give equal praise to the Public and Private Bands. The public band (a somewhat neglected institution) meets weekly on Saturday, and is composed of those members of society who profess to enjoy a clear evidence of their acceptance with God.* It is, in point of fact, a minor love-feast, only far more quietly conducted. But perhaps the private

* No person, according to an old law, is allowed to meet in Band who does not leave off drams, snuff, and tobacco,—a trio which always go together in Wesleyan anathemas.

band would be found, on due inquiry, to be, of all the Methodist institutions, the most favourable to Christian holiness. It is composed of not more than three persons of either sex, who agree to meet weekly at each other's houses for prayer and pious conversation. It is cultivated most by the gentler sex; and to this source more than to any other mere instrumentality we have been accustomed to refer the many eminent examples of female piety with which Wesleyanism has abounded, from the days of Mary Fletcher and Esther Ann Rogers, down to the present time. We should not doubt of finding more than one acknowledged model of the *Christian lady* in nearly every Wesleyan circuit. No where have we seen woman more 'adorned with every grace,' than among the well-educated Wesleyan families. The Methodist matron may be described as of pure, yet sprightly conversation; of simple, yet dignified manners; of chaste, yet elegant attire; a pattern of neatness and order; pious without pretence, and uniting cheerfulness with the priceless ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. In some, indeed, there may be discovered a tinge of mysticism, and a secret sympathy with the sentimental raptures of Mrs. Rowe and Madam Guion; but, in general, the tone of their experience is subdued, while their holiness, not waiting for formal profession, beams forth in the mild radiance of a dutiful discharge of relative obligations.

But we are in danger of extending this sketch beyond due bounds; and, although conscious of having very imperfectly executed our design, we must rest content with drawing to a close in a few observations.

Upon a review of the facts, we cannot fail to be struck with the immense power wielded by the Wesleyan Conference. Territorially covering every parish in England, and pushing its conquests, like the state, into every quarter and corner of the earth; with 1,685 ministers under its orders, 15,000 local preachers, and 30,000 leaders, stewards, and trustees; with 468,313 members of society acknowledging its sway, and perhaps 2,000,000 hearers affording their countenance; with millions of property under its control, and an annual revenue of hardly less than one million at its disposal;—it presents to the reflecting mind an aspect adapted to impress with awe, largely mingled with anxiety. And when we consider that all these means and agencies are put in motion by one central impulse, and guided and controlled by one central hand, that anxiety is ready to become alarm. Could we but be sure that this stupendous and smoothly-working machinery is constantly used for the production of unmixed good, alarm would give

placee to rejoicing. But we cannot so delude ourselves. Collect from preceding facts the connexional engagements of the ministers ; and it will be seen, that their occupations must resemble those of county magistrates, town-clerks, parish overseers, and so forth, much more than the legitimate functions of the Christian pastorate. We know that many of them are learned divines, and a still greater number energetic and edifying preachers ; we know that their Arminianism is not tainted with Pelagianism, and that their notions of Christian perfection are not, as is imagined, inconsistent with human pravity ; we know, too, that, with a tact that implies the presence of a presiding genius, their ranks are constantly recruited with every variety of talent ; but we also know, that they are encumbered with too much secular business, are invested with too much power, are too much infested with a crowd of parrot-like imitators of their leading preachers, are far too exclusive in their views of Wesleyan excellence and of ministerial authority, and are too much cut off, by their itinerant plan, from the play of those sympathies than which nothing is more essential to the success of ministerial labours—that, in one word, they are too much under the influence of these and other deteriorating forces, to permit the hope of anything like the full weight of their power and influence being ever directed towards the great ends of a gospel ministry and a Christian church. So far as those ends are concerned, we do not mean to deny, what we have above acknowledged, the existence of much true and deep piety in the Wesleyan Connexion ; but, although not now so narrow and exclusive as in former days, it still too largely partakes of a feeling of unparalleled excellence, while, owing to causes already indicated, its general tendency is to decline into a cold and formal profession. Upon society at large, Wesleyanism no longer acts so vigorously as once it did. The additions to its numbers are comparatively small, sometimes counterpoised by positive declension, and often concealing, under an aspect of aggregate success, ominous instances of local inertia or retrogression. Its territorial comprehensiveness, combined with the activity and ostentatiousness of its central administration, may yield such compensation as the increase of public admiration can afford for the diminution of religious usefulness ; but Wesleyanism, like every other thing human, seems destined to decay, and is now, to all appearance, in the portentous stage of worldly respectability. The question remains, what is likely to be its influence in the State. To this topic a whole paper might be profitably devoted ; but we must dismiss it in a single sentence. Had the people who compose the body free scope for the manifestation of their sentiments, we cannot doubt that the

influence of Wesleyanism would be freely given to all measures for the reform of abuses, for the improvement of the physical and moral condition of the community, and for the abolition of every law and every institution which interfere with the fullest extension of our civil and religious liberties. But, tied down as the Wesleyans are by laws which prevent them from moving hand or foot, and by usages which beget and maintain a servile spirit, the country and the legislature must receive their notions of the state of opinion in the Wesleyan church from the Conference and its emissaries. Nor can we expect that those who have contrived to build, even upon the foundation of the voluntary principle, so compact a structure of priestly authority in their own favour, will ever exert their political influence in support of any line of state policy, which might afterwards be quoted as a precedent for the entire subversion of their lordly hierarchy. In a word, the Wesleyan system is at once the best and the worst of its kind—the worst in reference to ecclesiastical government, the best in relation to practical efficiency ; the good resulting mainly from abundant lay agency, the bad from boundless clerical assumption. They who shall adopt the good and reject the bad, will make a nearer approximation to the standard of Christian utility than has been witnessed since apostolic times.

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